Manchester College, Oxford.

Theology and Secular Literature.

AN ADDRESS

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM ADDIS, M.A.,

ON THE OCCASION OF THE

OPENING OF THE 124th SESSION,

11th OCTOBER, 1909.

The College adheres to its original principle of freely imparting Theological knowledge without insisting on the adoption of particular Theological doctrines.

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THEOLOGY AND SECULAR LITERATURE.

I HAVE heard many excellent and earnest addresses delivered from this place on the importance of theological study in general, or again on the necessity of attending to some branch of theological enquiry in particular, or once more on the temper which should characterise the youthful student of theology, and the ideal which he ought to set before himself when he addresses himself to the search for truth in relation to the highest interests of mankind. All truth is sacred, but a special sanctity belongs to truth concerning God and man in relation to each other. Rightly is theology entitled the queen of sciences. Nothing is or ever can be so worthy of strenuous, candid, self-sacrificing labour, save and except the acquisition of that religious experience which theology presupposes and seeks to explain in a reverent and rational spirit. To-day, however, I desire to say something by way of warning against the narrow and exclusive study of theology. I venture to do so in the interest of theology itself. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that devotion to theology alone is the worst training to which a young man can subject himself. Theology isolated from other knowledge loses most of its meaning, and separates with disastrous consequence the theologian from the realm of fact and reality. We have a sad example of such pernicious result in the Church of France at this day and this hour. Think for a little of the tragedy which is being enacted there before our eyes. On one side you see the clergy with many women and a small number of clerically-minded men; on the other side the

great mass of intelligence, culture, activity of thought. There is, as we all know, a considerable number of ecclesiastics and pious laymen who would fain bridge over the ever widening-gulf between the clerical mind and the lay intelligence. But alas! we also know that the authorities of the Church cast out their names as evil—enlightened, yes even partially enlightened teachers have been driven from their theological chairs, and there is ground for the fear that some who have prophesied in vain may range themselves ultimately in the ranks of those who abandon as hopeless the contention for rational piety, the endeavour to unite fearless love of truth with devotion to pure religion and faith in the powers of the world unseen. We ask, and very naturally, how this sad state of things, this divorce between French clericalism and the intelligence of the French nation, has come to be. Certainly, the French clergy have many titles to respect. They are sincere, and indeed were they not sincere they would never have enlisted in the clerical army. A young cleric has the prospect of a life which is just lifted above abject poverty; even if he rises to episcopal preferment his income will be mean, and he will have countless vexations and probably bitter unpopularity to encounter. He surrenders himself to the renunciation of family life, and his personal liberty is limited to the last degree, for he cannot choose his sphere of labour, and may be moved from place to place, at the will of his bishop. It would need a great deal of evidence to convince an impartial judge that such persons are, as a rule, defective in purity and self-devotion; and in matter of fact the evidence is all the other way. There are, of course, exceptions; unworthy members are to be found in a body so numerous. Still from a moral point of view the French clergy, as a whole, need not fear comparison with any other class of men equally large on the face of the earth. Why then is their influence on their educated fellow-countrymen so insignificant? Several reasons might be given, of which one only concerns us

here. This reason is that the French cleric wears the cassock from his boyhood; he undergoes a hurried and most imperfect education in secular knowledge, and is trained in some manual of that Thomist philosophy, which despite its merits, and they are many, was ingeniously framed by a man of commanding ability to fit in with the theological definitions of Popes and Councils. This preliminary course of training is followed by three or four years devoted almost exclusively to the theology of the middle ages. The Biblical exegesis which accompanies theology proper is subsidiary to it, and is also mediæval. What follows? This, that the seminarist lives in a different world from that of the layman. Layman and ecclesiastic start with different axioms, with different aims, and seldom listen to each other. The unbeliever and the heretic appear in the orthodox treatise, but in a caricature which resembles the real unbeliever only as a scarecrow resembles a man. If the heretic would only make the objection to Catholic dogma which he is supposed to make in the manuals, the task of refuting him would be easy. Unfortunately, the obstinate misbeliever refuses to do anything of the sort, and hence the refutation fails to refute the real antagonist. The orthodox champion is like M. Jourdain in Molière's play. He can parry the thrust well enough if his antagonist will be kind enough to make that thrust which the fencing-master taught him to expect, and for which he prepared him. Against an enemy who is unreasonable enough to choose his own mode of attack M. Jourdain is defenceless.

It was not always thus with the great and noble Church of France. No doubt the germ of decay is inseparable from the very principle of sacerdotalism, but not till the Revolution did the Church assume in full its present characteristics. In the seventeeth, and in the former half of the eighteenth centuries, the Church produced a succession of great orators, great historians, great canonists and critics, of which any church might be proud. Harnack says the learning of the

French Church has scarcely been equalled, much less surpassed by that of Protestant Germany, and Gibbon frankly asserts that a single congregation of Benedictines, that of St. Maur, has done greater service to ecclesiastical learning than the two English Universities combined. The commentary on the gospels by Maldonatus, the Bible dictionary of Calmet, the great editions of the Fathers by the Benedictines, the Historical Mémoires of Tillemont, of whom Gibbon says that his accuracy approached genius, the "dogmata theologica" of Petavius, really a history of dogma written with exhaustive learning, great elegance of style, and the application more or less consciously of the principle of development, the labours of Sirmond, and Hardouin on the Councils, the edition of St. John of Damascus by the Dominican Le Quien, and of the Greek Euchologion by the Dominican Goar, these and many other honoured names will occur to the student of ecclesiastical literature. The change of the French Church to its present sad condition began when controversy shifted from disputes about the meaning of the Bible and the Fathers, in which the French Church, as yet by no means Papalist, more than held its own, to discussions on the nature of religion and the origin of Christianity. Here the French Church lacked the liberty which is the indispensable condition of free enquiry. But the deadly blow was struck by the Revolution. The old universities were swept away: the ancient anti-Papal traditions of the Gallican Church were after a time renounced, and the seminary became the only place of education for the clergy. The university influence lasted down to our own day in Germany—a certain number of universities had a Catholic faculty, no university being purely Catholic—and in the middle of the last century it was still possible to be ordained without entering a seminary at all. In consequence, independent research and a small measure of freedom survived there when it had died out elsewhere within the limits of the Roman obedience. That in its turn was destroyed by the Vatican Council, and the

Kultur-Kampf of 1870 and the years immediately subsequent. The result has been that the aspirants to Holy Orders have ceased for the most part to attend the universities, so at best betake themselves to the one or two universities which are wholly Roman Catholic. The number of those who take even this latter course is exceedingly small. The Roman clergy are completely dominated by the seminary system, and the result has been the destruction of clerical influence among the educated laity, as well as the ruin of theology itself.

Similar dangers threaten the Church of England at this moment. It is true that the English clergyman, who may be and generally is a married man, is bound to general society by strong ties of which his Roman brother has no personal experience. Besides this, about two thirds of the candidates for Anglican Orders have taken their degree at a University: when this course has not been pursued, the aspirant for Holy Orders has at least been educated at schools or institutions for higher teaching which are free indeed by comparison with Roman seminaries. Moreover, the English Church has this inestimable advantage, that its clergy differ widely in their theological views, so that a young man is brought necessarily into contact with colleagues who hold a position which is not his or that of his immediate teachers. There is a certain amount of freedom in the books studied at theological colleges, or required for the Bishop's examination. The works of Westcott and of the Nonconformist Dale are widely used, and I know of one diocese which would perhaps be generally taken as permeated more than most by the extreme High Church spirit, in which the Bishop prescribes Lightfoot's commentary on the Philippians, with its epoch-making treatise on the Christian Ministry, as a subject of examination for the priesthood. Still thoughtful and attached members of the English Church view with anxiety and misgiving the growth of the theological colleges of the High Anglican type. Pressure is put upon all candidates to go for

a year at least to a theological college of some kind. Most of the young men who betake themselves thither have only taken a pass degree, if they have done even that. They prefer High Church theological colleges in accordance with the tone which is for the present popular in the church, and they easily acquire ideas of sacerdotal power which have no real basis in the prayer book, and are simply incredible to the vast majority of the Anglican laity. It is still more unfortunate that young men adopt party views with no time or opportunity of serious enquiry in after life. The theological colleges are placed, with few exceptions, in situations remote from University life, and the zeal with which young clergymen throw themselves into practical work after ordination precludes any endeavour to supplement by reading the defects of their earlier education. The moral effect of all this is deplorable, not because young clergymen lack goodness—the very opposite is the case, but because they are too often deficient in the love of truth. Now truth, as I venture to think, should come first. It is a fatal error to make the sacrifice of truth even in the supposed interests of goodness. Our first question should be, Is this doctrine or this alleged fact true? Does it rest on solid evidence? Have I studied that evidence or done my utmost to study it with the rigid and absolute impartiality? Till that is done, a man has no right to ask, "Will this belief work, will it give me the moral strength I want in the struggle of life?" Such questions have their place, but that place is secondary. The heart may rise like a man in wrath, and answer "I have felt." After all, however, the heart, though it can feel, cannot judge. Reason no doubt is bound to consider the reality and the origin of religious and ethical feeling. But with reason and with that alone the ultimate verdict rests. Reason is the rudder. Woe to the ship well built, well manned, well appointed and provisioned though it be, which has no rudder, or a rudder that will not act. Everything sooner or later will

go to pieces on the rock. Woe to the man who puts goodness first and truth second. He may in the end make shipwreck of goodness itself.

It may be said that those to whom I have the privilege of speaking just now are in no need of the warning I have uttered. To be sure, if the ideal of the College could be realised, if we drew together a body of students, all graduates, numerous enough to produce a keen spirit of investigation and discussion from many different standpoints, and a body of teachers, themselves drawn from the national and nonconformist communions, free as the students and competent to help and guide them, then the danger of a narrow and exclusive training, though still present, would be reduced to a minimum. The nearest approach to such an ideal which I know is to be found in the two great Presbyterian Churches of Scotland. Let me add that I often dream of a time when that ideal will be realised more fully still in our own College. That will not come to pass in my time, or even in the time of the youngest student who is here to-day. Nevertheless, we have a freedom which, in this country at all events, is unique. We are not bound to assent to any creed, or to become members of any church: neither are we bound to refrain from subscribing to any creed or adhering loyally to any church. On this basis we have laboured together—may I say it ?—in cordial amity, without the remotest approach to friction or difficulty of any kind. However, in all possible circumstances, even when a man is entirely free from party spirit, the danger of exclusive devotion to theology is still present. In the rest of this address I will try to point out the chief reasons which make it imperative for the theological student, if he desires that his theology be really progressive, to keep abreast, so far as he can, with literature which is not directly theological. If he fails to do so, if, *e.g.*, he is completely immersed in the criticism of the Biblical documents, or in the study of comparative religion, or in the history of doctrine, nay,

if he is eager in the study of all these subjects, he falls short of the standard he should set before himself: he must forfeit the influence upon his hearers which otherwise he had a right to expect, and his theology becomes arid and unfruitful, something which he himself does not understand. Of course, we have to remember that a man's memory and time are limited, and that knowledge must always be proportioned to opportunity. For all that, proportion can be observed. In other words, we should never be so busied with theology as to leave no time for humane letters. Nor is the occupation with secular literature merely a thing by the way which theologians may pursue or neglect as they please; on the contrary, theology, separated from secular knowledge, inevitably droops and dries. Let me try to point out some of the grounds on which this assertion rests.

The separation of theology from secular science and literature is fatal, because, on the whole, the standard of accuracy is higher, rigour of method and the refusal to accept feeling or prejudice as a substitute for proof are stronger among laymen than among professed theologians. In these respects the Church has more to learn from the world than the world from the Church. You may think this a hard saying, and so perhaps it is. But is it unjust? To some extent the very virtues of the theologian expose him to special dangers. He regards religion as the supreme factor in the welfare of mankind. He is eager above all things to prove the central verities of religion, and so he is apt to become an advocate rather than a judge, and to have little taste for the dry light of truth. Often he forgets that you can never conquer an adversary till you have entered into his mind, done your utmost to see things with his eyes, and then appropriated every grain of truth which he holds and justly values. This kind of controversy calls for much self-denial and endurance on the part of him who pursues it. Still it is worth the price. If you strike into the opposite path, if you take refuge in that seminary system of which I have been speaking,

if you substitute rhetoric for logic, or make your final appeal to feeling, you will learn in bitter experience the truth of Homer's words, that a man loses half his excellence on the day he becomes a slave. There are consequences from which a man may shrink, be his Christianity ever so liberal. "That is flat pantheism," Sterling said to Carlyle. "What matter," was the answer, "if it be pottheism, provided it be true." It is comfortable to feel that at least there are some few beliefs which are sacrosanct, and must not be brought into question. Such, we may suppose, are the being and personality of God and the hope of individual immortality. We have, however, no right to make any such exceptions. On the contrary, when we take up a book which is really worth reading into our hands, our wisest course is to try to understand it, and to remember that we cannot understand unless we sympathise. When we have once entered into the spirit of the book we may, on a second perusal, draw back and criticise it, discovering, if we can, the weak places of the argument. This is the reasonable way, and it is at the same time the way of faith. We cannot serve God by trifling with truth. We do not deserve to be called soldiers of Christ if we shrink from facing the unwelcome fact or desire to close the mouths of our antagonists. The man of faith is confident that no weapon formed against the truth will prevail, that cherished beliefs are shaken only that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. If this be so, then our fight must be with real men. We must not set up men of straw as our adversaries, and raise the shout of triumph when we have cast them down. It was common in the middle ages to describe philosophy as the *ancilla fidei, i.e.,* as the handmaid, or, more accurately, "the female slave" of faith. But what value can belong to the evidence of one who is a slave and compelled to speak as a slave? Philosophy, when it ceases to be free, ceases to be philosophy, and the witness which it bears to Christian faith is worthless when that witness is obtained by collusion.

We may remark in the next place that the history of religion cannot be divorced from the history of civilisation. We are justified in regarding all religion as one. It is from beginning to end the search after union with a higher power. It starts in animism or some such rudimentary form of primitive feeling, and it is consummated in the words of Him who said (it does not matter for our present purpose whether he said it in express words or by the general impress of His life and teaching), "I and the Father are one," and again "The glory which thou hast given me, I have given unto them, that they may be one even as we are one." Now it is plain that the various stages in religious development are unintelligible apart from the temperament and the social condition of the people who reach them. For example, idolatry is not originally a decline from a higher level. Rather it arises when men begin to reach some definite idea of the gods they worship: then and then only are they able to assign them certain forms, animal or human. The vague worship of spirits does not lend itself even to the rudest forms of art. So the priesthood arises when men are skilful enough to build temples and roof them in and deposit there the sacred image and the treasure brought to the shrine and accumulated there as the wealth of the tribe or nation grows. At a still later stage men begin to criticise myths which have been handed down from immemorial antiquity. They, or at least the more thoughtful among them, have outgrown that early philosophy which was designed to account for everything strange and mysterious. The explanations offered have come to be despised as childish, and the stories about gods and goddesses are rejected outright as grossly and obviously immoral, or else they are subjected to rationalising explanations, quite foreign to the original sense of the myth. All along the line, St. Paul's principle holds good, "That is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural." Manifestly, to understand the history of religion, we must understand the

tendencies and social evolution of the people who held each particular religion. In what other way can we appreciate the vast gulf which separates Greek from Roman religion, and both from the religions of Asia? How can we catch the spirit of Greek mythology apart from the study of Greek art, or the spirit of Roman ceremonial, if we ignore the legal and imperial genius of the Roman nation? We can, of course, trace the same change and growth in the religion of Israel. Nor, however firm our belief may be in the special revelation given to Israel, can we build a wall of enclosure round the sacred books of the Hebrews. We cannot do so for several decisive reasons. First, it is only by comparison of many religions with each other that we can seize and understand that law of evolution which is common to them all when once they have risen above initial savagery. The religion of Israel has for the last century and a half been set in a new and far more interesting and attractive light, just because we have successfully applied the same method of enquiry and the same generous spirit of appreciation to religions which used to be flung into one confused mass and stigmatised as heathen. Besides, Hebrew religion, considered apart and by itself, is inscrutable. It had, and it has, eternal truths to impart, but the framework in which these truths are set was borrowed from Babylon, and to some extent, perhaps, the germs of these truths were derived from the same quarter. The later Hebrew doctrines on good and evil spirits, or immortality and judgment to come, deserve and require to be carefully considered in their relations to Zoroastrianism. More important by far is the amalgamation of Greek and Hebrew thought in Alexandria after the conquests of Alexander. When that has been studied, the history of the early Christian Church becomes intelligible, and a notable part of the New Testament may be set in a new and clearer light. Indeed, scholars like Sir William Ramsay and Dr. Percy Gardner have taught us quite as much as

professed theologians about the early days of the Christian faith. And here I beg leave to say a word or two on the importance of classical training. The theologian has to know something of all the great religions. After all, they are not very numerous. But when we study the religion of Greece and Rome, and the infusions which they received from Eastern sources, we have this inestimable advantage, that we are able to study the original texts. I may be told that anyone who likes to do so may study Sanscrit or Pali or the Cuneiform inscriptions of Babylon and early Persia. Very few, however, can avail themselves of such an opportunity, whereas Greek and Latin are still part of an Englishman's ordinary education. Moreover, it would, I suppose, be generally admitted that the Greek philosophers, the Greek and Latin poets, are far more akin to our thought and expression than Buddhist or Confucian or Zoroastrian authors. Nor would anyone, I suppose, maintain that any of their literature has treasures to compare with Homer or Plato, or the Greek Tragedies, or Catullus, Vergil, and Horace.

The truth which I have been endeavouring to set forth has its application in the mission field. Surely every Christian is bound to take an interest in missions, not because he holds the monstrous belief that the heathen will be tormented hereafter for lack of truth which they could not learn, but because he is convinced that Christ is the head of every man, the ideal of humanity, as also the supreme and final revelation of the Father. Believing this, he wishes all men to share in the blessings which he himself has inherited. So far no difficulty arises, and an Indian missionary with a reasonable amount of knowledge and experience would know how to distinguish between the ignorant worship of cruel and sensual superstition on the one hand and the elements of pure and spiritual religion on the other. But missionaries are also gradually learning that often religious conversion must be preceded by advance in education and morality. The late Dr. Pope, one of the most enlightened

missionaries that ever lived, told me that his whole attitude to heathenism was deeply affected when he found that for some of our theological terms, terms familiar to us all, the Tamil language had no equivalent. The schoolmaster, the doctor (especially the female doctor), the magistrate must prepare the way for Christ. Nearer home we may find the same truth illustrated, the truth that general and religious development must go hand in hand. Our Lord has taught us the one pure and perfect morality in the Sermon on the Mount. It does not, however, follow that that morality is meant for all at once, or that all are able to receive it. Take the case of a boy at school. No wise father or teacher would advise him to turn the other cheek when struck on the right, to go two miles with any one who would force him to go one, to give his cloak to the man or boy who had stolen his coat. True, these principles need explanation, and are patient of an explanation, which, though divine, does not cease to be human and reasonable. Yes, but even when you explain the real meaning of the Sermon on the Mount, you cannot expect a boy to follow you, and even if he could so understand the Lord's teaching, he is not sufficiently advanced to assimilate it. Luther said of his children, "These little creatures are not under the law but under grace." It is a kindly saying, and we do not love Luther the less because he took so indulgent a view at a time when the education of the young was usually stern and often cruel. Nevertheless, I feel inclined to reverse Luther's dictum, and to hold that even baptised children are in a sense not under grace but under the law. Individual child life corresponds to the childhood of the human race. Israel had to wait for the coming of the Son of God. Till then it was restrained and hemmed in by law; it was subjected to the watchful care of a tutor, till it reached the full privileges of manhood. The law under which it lived was good, so far as it went, but it was imperfect; it was not the law of love, "the royal law of liberty," "the law of the spirit of life in Christ

Jesus." Much the same is the discipline which a school boy needs. He cannot be expected to look far ahead, or to love duty simply for its own sake. It is better that he should be taught obedience with a clear apprehension of the consequences which will overtake him if he is disobedient and lazy. We expect him not to tell lies, and do well to insist that he must not bully; that he should be good-natured and unselfish, and therefore popular among his school-fellows; that he ought to be ashamed of greediness, and ready to share his pleasures with his companions. He cannot be blamed if he gives blow for blow, but we may encourage him not to be quarrelsome, nor to fight except with boys that are his match, always to fight fair, and when the battle is lost or won to bear no malice. A boy who begins life thus makes a good start. Higher aims will follow in due season. Of course the parallel drawn between the training of boys in our land is only applicable when missionaries are dealing with degrees of civilisation much lower than their own. That is almost universally the case at present, but it was not so in the early days of the Christian mission, nor, I suppose, is it the case now in Japan.

I have said that general education is needed if we are to understand the history of religion. This is sure to be especially true when we direct our attention to the study of dogma. We must beware of misusing the word. It has been the fashion, though happily there are signs that this fashion is waning, to use the word dogma as a term almost of opprobrium. If we disliked a principle or a tenet, we called it a dogma; if we were favourably disposed to it, we called it doctrine, or conviction, or principle, or Christian truth. It is needless to say that such an attitude is altogether irrational. In framing its dogmas the Church stated its theory of religion in the terms of the best philosophy it knew. What other course was possible? It is quite true that dogmatic theology is not religion, any more than physiology is life. A man may be a learned and subtle

disputant and a bad Christian, just as he may have a profound and accurate acquaintance with the laws of health, though he himself is dying of consumption. The analogy, so far from detracting from the importance of dogma, confirms its title to a chief place in theological education. Dogma is an attempt to sum up, to account for and explain religious experience in the light of scientific knowledge. Few competent to judge will maintain that the effort has always been crowned with success. Besides, the philosophy itself is often outworn, and we are justified in a preliminary objection to the doctrine, *e.g.*, of transubstantiation, viz.: that it assumes a theory of substance and accident which modern philosophy has dismissed long since as insufficient and untenable. The fact remains that sometimes at least dogmas represent long centuries of discussion, to which great men, such as Origen, Athanasius, Augustine have contributed the best thought they had to give. To understand them we must understand the philosophy with which they worked. We must test the relative truth of their results, *i.e.*, we must ask how far they were justified on assumptions common to them and to their adversaries. Nobody, for example, would charge Carlyle with exaggerated reverence for dogmatic Christianity, yet he came in the later part of his life to the conviction that in his struggle with Arianism, St. Athanasius fought and won the battle for the very existence of Christian faith. Harnack, with more adequate knowledge, gives a similar verdict. Apart from any particular question, it is most unlikely that the great theologians of the past toiled quite in vain, and it is but a superficial judgment which can regard the long struggle of great minds as no better than a dispute about words. It is our task to unveil the real meaning which the words partly conceal, partly reveal, and to translate the terminology of the distant past into that of the present. To do so, the study of secular and non-Christian philosophy is a desideratum which is indispensable. The early Fathers of the

Eastern Church are unintelligible to those who are ignorant of Plato and Philo: St. Augustine is the disciple of the Neo-Platonists, Aquinas calls Aristotle "the philosopher," and he made it the work of his life to reconcile the philosophy of Aristotle with the definition of the Western Church. Now, when we approach dogma in this reasonable spirit, two consequences follow. We see that the method of theology is purely human. It has no guarantee of infallibility. Nay, sometimes, instead of explaining the teaching of our Lord, it has led men away from the simplicity which is in Christ. General councils, says the twenty-first Article, "may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God." We do not accept absolutely the theology of the past, because that theology is human, and it is human to err. But there is another side, and we must not forget it. Just because it is human, dogma cannot fail to be in some sense rational, and so far forth it has a right to our patient and sympathetic examination. So we may hope to be saved from a blind superstition, and also from a rude and ignorant iconoclasm. Let me add that theological movements may not be entirely retrograde, even when they seem to be so. In important respects, the Tractarian School, which began in 1833, has exercised, as I venture to think, a disastrous influence on the National Church. But we should do it wrong if we denied that its influence was in some respects a gain to that liberalism which it denounced with such fanatical violence. It spurned the Reformation, and so far was purely mischievous. But it taught its disciples to see the manifold good which mingled with the faults and imperfections of the Patristic and Mediæval Church. Surely that was an advance on the Evangelical theory that the Church entered a dark tunnel in the sub-apostolic age, to emerge with a shriek at the Reformation. Nor should we forget the real debt which we owe to the religious genius of Newman. He, whatever his defects and limitations may have been, was a

prophet of reality. His sermons, with their singular absence of rhetoric, are abiding lessons in discipline of heart, a solemn warning against unreal words, and against any trust or confidence in emotions which do not issue in improved conduct. We are all greatly indebted to the High Church School for the beauty and solemnity which they have infused into public worship. This has been pure gain, now that it has ceased, in great measure, to be associated with any single party or even with any single church.

So far we have been considering theological literature in its relations to general knowledge. We should also remember that some of our best religious teachers have not been theologians at all, but poets and novelists. Sir Walter Scott had a good deal to do with preparing the way for the High Church revival, to which I have referred, though he did not share its narrowness and exclusiveness. He was far from being an accurate historian or careful antiquary. He began with an imperfect education, so that he never could read Homer in Greek, and in later life forgot the Greek alphabet. His history, moreover, cannot always be trusted, and he makes such gross blunders as to suppose that the Roman Catholics celebrate mass in the evening, or that the Scotch Episcopalians under the Stuarts made a general use of the Prayer Book in their parish churches. For all that he was, to use Coleridge's epithet for Shakespeare, *μυριόνους ἀνήρ* "a myriad-minded man." He made the past live, he had a genius which enabled him to seize what was noblest and truest in all religion. He is his best when he portrays the light and shade of Scotch Presbyterian piety. Jeannie Deans and her crabbed but estimable father, stern, bigoted, self-complacent, with a keen eye to profit, yet tender-hearted, high-minded, and devout, are perhaps his best contribution to religious portraiture. That was the kind of picture he did best, for it was taken from the life he knew most intimately. But it is not too much to

say that he appreciated religion in all its forms. Rebecca, the Jewess, ranks among his noblest creations. In "The Monastery" he has left us the touching picture of two college friends who take opposite sides in the great quarrel of the Reformation. One becomes a zealous monk, the other a zealous preacher of the Protestant faith. They meet after long years of separation. They differ and differ with intensity still, and yet they are powerless to overcome that affection which is deeper than all the creeds and more precious in the sight of Him who made us all and loves us all, and has given us a commandment that we should love each other. Scott's natural sympathies were with royalists and cavaliers, and his estimate of Claverhouse may err by excess of sympathy as the Presbyterian may, and doubtless does err by excess of antipathy; but he has a keen eye for the defects of Stuart government, and probably Counsellor Pleydell expresses Scott's opinion when he professes his attachment to the Scottish Episcopal Communion, which is the Church of his fathers, and yet adds, "It is the shadow of a shade, and I do not wish it otherwise." Even to the most fanatical exhibition of covenanting zeal, as it appears in Ephraim Macbriar, he cannot refuse a certain amount of genuine sympathy. Dean Stanley once said, "I am of the religion of Sir Walter Scott," and we might choose many a worse religious teacher.

Scott was a pious and orthodox believer, though his orthodoxy, as has been said, was of a genial and liberal kind. A generation after his death another novelist arose, inferior certainly to Scott in range of interest, in romantic charm, in power to resuscitate the past and make it live again before our eyes, but, at the same time, with a religious depth such as Scott never knew. I refer to George Eliot. Long before she wrote her first novel she had abandoned all profession of Christianity. Not only, however, did she retain the warmest sympathy with Christianity at its best, or, to put it better, with all Christianity which was real, but she has left us pictures of religious life

which in their kind cannot be surpassed. Her best works are, I think, her earliest, "Scenes of Clerical Life," "Adam Bede," "The Mill on the Floss," "Silas Marner." Here she was dealing with scenes which she had known from her childhood, in which she was thoroughly at home; with pictures from the Florence of Savonarola's time, or from modern Jewish life, or even from the political agitation for parliamentary reform, or the repeal of the corn laws, she had not the same advantage. Three types of religious life she set on the canvas supremely well, the religion of the Evangelicals and Methodists in the early part of the last century, the honest sturdy religion which best represents the real temper of the National Church, the really estimable heathenism of many excellent people who repeat in good faith the prayers of the liturgy, and yet accept and really live by a moral and religious standard which is not Christian at all. We feel as if it had been the privilege of our lives to know Mr. Tryan, with his boundless pity and self-sacrifice, and that power from above which made him the minister of God's mercy to a noble woman driven well nigh to despair and trembling on the brink of utter ruin. Nothing can be more admirable than the brief words in which George Eliot sums up the effect of the Evangelical movement in a parish. "To some it brought a new spiritual experience, to others a new spiritual vocabulary." Mr. Jerome, the mill-owner, who has no education, and can only express himself in a rude dialect, is still, partly by nature, partly by the purifying influences of his creed, as perfect a gentleman as Colonel Newcome himself, and not a whit less loveable. "O well, Sir, my father was a working man, so I went to a night school as was kep' by a dissenter, one Jacob Wright, an' it was from that man, Sir, as I got my little schoolin' an' my knowledge of religion. I went to chapel with Jacob—he was a good man was Jacob—and to chapel I've been ever since. But I'm no enemy of the Church, Sir, when the Church brings light to the ignorant

and sinful. Yes, Sir, I'll stand by you ; I'll go to Church wi' you Sunday evening." There is another side to the Evangelical movement, less real, but extremely amusing. It is perhaps best represented by that elderly spinster, Miss Pratt, the doctor's sister. "I am indebted," she said, "to Mr. Tryan for opening my eyes to the great cardinal doctrine of justification by faith, much as I had reflected on all subjects in the course of my life," and though "from a child I had a deep sense of religion." She had always "been profoundly humble," though she acknowledged that her humility had proceeded from natural endowment rather than from accurate apprehension of Evangelical doctrine. "In my early days the Gospel light was obscured in the English Church, notwithstanding the possession of our admirable liturgy, than which I know no human composition more faultless and sublime." Adam Bede's religion is not Evangelical, but it is as good in its way as Evangelicalism, even at its best. The dominant note of it is struck in the first chapter. In it we are told that Adam, as he strides across the fields, after a long day of hard work, broke out into the tune which had been running in his head all day : "Let all thy converse be sincere, Keep conscience as the noonday clear, For God's all-seeing eye surveys Thy secret thoughts, thy works and ways." Nor can we withhold our sympathy from people like Mrs. Patten, who would satisfy no modern stand of Christianity or Churchmanship. "When Mr. Barton" (a good, but not very wise Evangelical curate, very different from Mr. Tryan) "comes to me, he talks about nothing but my sins and my need o' marcy Now, Mr. Hackitt, I've never been a sinner; from the first beginning, when I went into service, I al'ys did my duty to my employers. I was a good wife as any in the county—never aggravated my husband. The cheese-factor used to say my cheese was al'ys to be depended on. I've known women as their cheeses swelled a shame to be seen, when their husbands had counted on the cheese-money to make up their rent, and yet they'd three

gowns to my one. If I'm not to be saved, I know a many as are in a bad way." Horace read Homer over again at Praeneste, and found that he taught the lesson of life better than the old Academy or "the budge doctors of the stoic school," and so we may not without reason feel that some aspects of religious truth are better taught by Sir Walter Scott and George Eliot than by critics, conservative and radical, or by learned and able writers on the philosophy of religion.

In conclusion, for I have not time even to touch the religious teaching of the poets, clergymen or ministers must know men as they are, and address them in language which attracts and commands respect. Great poets like Pope, or novelists like Thackeray, may not do much for us by teaching religious truth, or inspiring us with religious enthusiasm. Still we shall owe them much, if they teach us good manners, good sense, good taste, that simplicity and directness of style which is natural to a man who is not thinking of himself but of the truth whose servant he is.